



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

**Federal Highway  
Administration**

# Memorandum

Subject

**ACTION:** Highway Noise-The Audible Landscape:  
A Manual for Highway Noise and Land Use

Date OCT 11 1995

From

Director, Office of Environment and Planning

Reply to  
Attn. of

HEP-41

To

Regional Administrators  
Federal Lands Highway Program Administrator

On June 12, 1995, in response to an audit of the highway traffic noise program by the OIG, the FHWA reissued existing guidance on highway traffic noise analysis in the document "Highway Traffic Noise Policy and Guidance." The text on page 19 of this document states, "Highway traffic noise should be reduced through a program of shared responsibility. Thus, the FHWA encourages State and local governments to practice compatible land use planning and control in the vicinity of highways. Local governments should use their power to regulate land development so that noise-sensitive land uses are either prohibited from being located adjacent to a highway, or that the developments are planned, designed, and constructed in such a way that noise impacts are minimized. Local officials should be made aware of the requirement for the adoption of an active noise-compatible land use control program for approval of Type II abatement."

The FHWA strongly encourages State highway agencies (SHAs) to work with local governments to implement programs for noise-compatible development. To aid in this effort and as part of our response to the OIG audit, we are redistributing copies of "The Audible Landscape: A Manual for Highway Noise and Land Use." While this manual was originally developed and distributed in the 1970's, it is still an excellent tool to assist local government officials by indicating ways in which local governments can guide the development of undeveloped land in the vicinity of existing highways. Numerous homes are being built everyday along existing highways, and SHAs can potentially save millions of dollars in Federal-aid funds currently spent on the construction of noise barriers if local governments follow the principles outlined in the manual.

Sufficient copies of the manual have been provided for forwarding one copy to each division office and one copy to each SHA. In addition, please offer FHWA assistance to State and local agencies desiring to develop a noise compatible land use program. HEP-40

staff will be available to provide this assistance. For further information or for additional copies of the manual, you may contact Bob Armstrong or Steve Ronning at (202) 366-2073 or (202) 366-2078, respectively.

Thank you for assistance in this matter.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Heanue". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kevin" written in a more compact, stylized manner and the last name "Heanue" written more fully.

Kevin Heanue

Attachment